

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-852-3345, Ext. 4336 or 271-4336



No More Cigarettes

No More Pounds

Some smokers want to quit but think they will gain weight if they do. That's not a good excuse. Although added pounds may be a possibility, they don't have to be the case. Besides, the health benefits of a smoke-free life are far more significant than the addition of a few pounds. Anyone who can stop smoking can lose weight if they really want to.

Why Some People Gain

There are a variety of reasons why you might gain weight when you quit smoking. Your senses of taste and smell usually become sharper and this causes an increase in appetite. You may be eating the wrong things to help suppress the nicotine cravings and these contribute to your calorie count. Also, the stresses of learning to cope with quitting may cause you to eat more than you usually do. The greater part of any weight gain is not due to a lack of cigarettes. It is due to an increase in calories.

Eating Properly

Correct eating habits are essential elements in any healthy life. You should always satisfy your basic daily nutritional needs whether you are becoming an ex-smoker or not, but if gaining weight is a fear, make sure your calories are controlled.

It is best to get most of your calories from vegetables, fruits, and grains with relatively few coming from fats and simple sugars. Consult a health professional if you have any doubts about what sort of a diet you should be following. It is generally recommended that females follow a 1,200 calorie-per-day plan and males a 1,500 calorie-per-day program for weight loss.

Sensible Snacking

There are plenty of satisfying snack foods that can help you when you quit smoking. Instead of sweets and salty, high-fat foods such as potato chips, rely on fresh fruits, plain popcorn, fruit juice, seltzer water, diet soda, frozen fruit bars, whole wheat crackers, breadsticks, low-fat cheese, sugarless gum, and sugarless candy to get you through the cravings. Cereals are a good snacking food, but don't use the pre-sweetened brands. Learn to limit yourself so you don't go overboard with snacks.

Exercise

Like proper eating, exercise is an important part of any health program. It's particularly essential for your efforts to stop smoking because it not only will help keep your weight under control, it will also help reduce your cravings for a cigarette.

If, as a smoker, you haven't been exercising much, start slowly and work up to exercising several times a week. Pick something you really enjoy doing such as walking, running, tennis, swimming, or bike riding and keep with it. If you do not have an exercise preference, an aerobics class might be a good start. Have fun while you are doing it. Once you have established a regular schedule for exercise, you may find your body craves it as much as it ever craved nicotine.

With a program of regular exercise and controlled calorie intake, the chances of your gaining excessive weight once you have stopped smoking are low for the majority of people.